the Bremen waved and Melcheor leaped from 500 feet, landing safely. The two Loenings turned for home.

They made it without difficulty, though they were forced to land in Portland, Maine, with only a few drops of fuel in their tanks.

According to James Parton, author of Air Force Spoken Here: General Ira Eaker & the Command of the Air, Eaker, Quesada and General Fechet discussed the problem of fuel supply while playing cards that night in Portland.

"It would have been nice to have had a gas station up there," said the lieutenant. "Someone to come up and give you ten."

"You mean like Smith and Richter," said Eaker, referring to two lieutenants who had flown for 37 hours in 1923 without landing by getting gas in a pipeline from another plane.

"Something like that," answered Quesada, "only with a bigger plane. Why don't we conduct a refueling flight with a crew on board and stay up as long as we can?" He recalled later how Captain Eaker acknowledged the idea thoughtfully and the general muttered, "Not a bad thought."

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Question Mark Flight Sets Endurance Record

By the late 1920s the Army Air Corps leaders had resolved to further the progress and potential of military aviation by taking full advantage of the public's insatiable hunger for "firsts" and "world records." Fittingly, on New Year's Day 1929, the Air Corps took another step toward fulfilling its resolution when a Fokker C-2A three-engine monoplane took off to achieve what would become a world record-breaking endurance flight.

The Question Mark and its crew were in the air for approximately 151 hours, circling above the Los Angeles area. The plane was able to remain airborne for this long due to 37 successful mid-air transfers of fuel from two Douglas C-1C refueling airplanes. The idea of in-flight refueling during an extended flight was spawned directly from the experiences of the recent Bremen mission. Following this rescue, Captain Eaker and Lieutenant Quesada had continued to harbor thoughts of such a mission, and now their dreams were taking flight.

From the inventory at Bolling Field, Eaker carefully selected the three-engine endurance plane and one of the C-1Cs left over from the around-the-world flight of 1924. (The plane was later dubbed the Question Mark by Eaker's wife due to the uncertainty of its longevity in the air.)

Most of the crew members were from the ranks of Bolling's premier Air Corps members pilots Eaker and Quesada, as well as SSgt. Roy Hooe, mechanic. The other two crew members were Major Carl "Tooey" Spaatz, commander of the flight, and Lieutenant Hany Halverson.

To prepare for the arduous flight, training and tests began several months before. According to the official statement by Major Spaatz, "The first steps in establishing contact between two airplanes were taken at Bolling Field six weeks prior to leaving for the west coast." The final operation before sending the airplane for modifications to Middletown Air Depot, Pennsylvania, was the transfer of a gallon can of water attached to the end of a hose.

"Tbe first actual transfer took place during the final test flight at Bolling Field on December 17, 1928 at which time 50 gallons of gasoline were transferred," wrote the major. This achievement was witnessed by Secretary of War Dwight Davis. Winning the Secretary's approval, the planes departed the field on December 18 bound for the west coast and more favorable weather.

On January 1, 1929 the Question Mark took to the air from Metropolitan Airport in Los Angeles, not landing until six days In all, 40 tons of supplies, gasoline and oil had been transferred in mid-air, making the week long flight an "unquestionable" success.

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Rickenbacker Receives Medal of Honor

For a deed of incredible valor performed a dozen years earlier in the skies above France, Colonel Eddie Rickenbacker received the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Herbert H. Hoover at Bolling Field on November 5, 1930. Colonel Rickenbacker was visibly moved as the President placed the blue ribbon about his neck. He then turned to the microphone and, in a voice trembling with emotion, he passed on to his comrades, "living and dead, on land, in the air, and on the seas," the honor he had just received.

The decoration was in recognition of the colonel's "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of action near Billy, France, during World War I." On September 25,1918, while he was on a voluntary patrol over the lines, he attacked a formation of seven German planes. Disregarding the odds against him, the ace flyer attacked the group and shot down two of them.

This was the second time Colonel Rickenbacker was honored at Bolling Field for his accomplishments as an aviator. He was welcomed to the field the first time on May 28, 192 1, following completion of his transcontinental flight from Redwood City, California.

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The Big Move to "New Bolling Field"

The original Bolling Field was unable to meet the increasing demands that resulted from the growth of military and civilian aviation, especially in the Washington area. In addition, the constant threat of high water was a decided drawback in long-range planning. The Washington Post summed up their opinion as to the mission effectiveness of Bolling Field: "Pilots coming in to land against a west wind sigh in resignation and call on all their experience and luck, for east of the field stands a precipitous hill crowned with the buildings of St. Elizabeth's hospital. At the bottom of this hill, skirting the field, runs a high tension power line." The journalist also remembered the torrential rains of 1928 when the flying area was under two to five feet of water causing the floors of the buildings to sag out of line. "Right now there's not a floor at Bolling Field on which you could play marbles," the writer added.

Responding to the worsening situation at the field, Major General Fechet, Chief of the Air Corps, sent a memorandum in the spring of 1928 to Trubee Davison, Assistant Secretary of War for Air, recommending that a substantial portion of land be purchased as an addition to Bolling Field. Davison acted promptly and advised the Senate Committee of Military Affairs that the total estimated cost of new land, Air Corps technical structures, quartermaster buildings, housing of personnel and utilities would be $2,581,200.

In 1930, the War Department acquired title to approximately 345 acres of land from the Washington Steel and Ordnance Company, which had operated a plant where the main area of Bolling Air Force Base is today. By 1933, approximately 1,200 men were at work on "New Bolling Field" and, as buildings were completed, Army Air Corps personnel moved from the original field.

Some of the earliest buildings constructed on the new field were the main barracks (Building 20), the flight surgeon's clinic (Building 21), officers' open mess, fire station tions, gymnasium, quartermaster warehouses (Buildings 11, 12, and 13), and the officers' quarters on Westover Avenue (although for a time some of these stately homes housed senior NCOS). A total of fifty brick buildings were built in an amazingly short period of time. Building 20, begun in 1932, was inspected and approved for use by March 1933. Today these buildings still stand, proudly serving the men and women of Bolling Air Force Base, testimony to their superb craftsmanship and solid contruction.

When interviewed in 1993, Mrs Ira Eaker recalled the early days of Boiling Field with fond memories. It was while she was a student at George Washington University in D.C. that she began dating the young Eaker. "It was a wonderful time for the two of us on Bolling, young and in love," she said. "There was always a party or dance going on at the open mess. The country wasn't at war yet, but the small air field was active nonetheless. There was a magic in the air during those days that was felt not only by the pilots, but by anyone involved with the field."

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Italian Flyers Heralded

Bolling Field got its chance to show Europe what an official honors ceremony was all about when General Italo Balbo and his fellow members of the Italian transatlantic armada landed in the summer of l933. The team was honored for flying 24 giant seaplanes from Italy to Chicago and then to New York a distance of 7,100 miles.

"When all his men had alighted from their planes, the general, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Barton K. Yount, Commanding Officer of Bolling Field, approached the welcoming stand," wrote a Washington Post reporter, "while the Navy Band, resplendent in dress clothes, played the four flourishes and four ruffles to which the general is entitled. Meanwhile, the last of the 19-gun salute was sounding." On Bolling to greet the aviators were Commerce Secretary Daniel C. Roper and a large delegation of Italian-American associations.

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Wiley Post Lands After World Trip

Another aviation pioneer to log a landing at Bolling Field was Wiley Post, who set the Winnie-Mae down on the runway July 26, 1933, after his successful world flight. Post was on his way to the White House to be officially greeted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

A man who had devoted his entire life to flying adventure, Post was the first man to fly around the world alone and the first to fly around the world a second time. He completed his first solo world flight in seven days, 18 hours and 29.5 minutes.

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'Hap' Arnold Leads Journey to Alaska

Leading a formation of Martin B-10 bombers, Lieutenant Colonel Henry H. "Hap" Arnold left Bolling Field July 19, 1934, for a mass flight of 4,000 miles to Fairbanks, Alaska. The flight was designed to demonstrate the capabilities of the Air Corps' long-range bombers. In addition, the crew accomplished critical mapping and survey work upon which future plans for the defense of Alaska were to be based. After completing the entire mission on schedule, they retumed to Bolling on August 20 and were greeted by Secretary of War George H. Dern and Major General Benjamin D. Foulois, Chief of the Army Air Corps.

The following year, on April 9, the recently-promoted Brigadier General Arnold was awarded the Mackay Trophy. The honor was bestowed upon the general by Major James Doolittle, Vice President of the National Aeronautical Association, for outstanding leadership of the Alaskan expedition.

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The Ferrying Command

Although the United States had not officially entered into World War II, Bolling Field had a significant pre-war role in ferrying American-built planes to friendly nations beginning in 1940. Following the proposal of General Arnold, now Chief of the Army Air Forces, that direct ferrying to Britain for U.S. plane manufacturers be performed by the Air Corps, the new Air Corps Ferrying Command was created and headquartered at Bolling Field in June 1941. The new Ferrying Command borrowed pilots from the Air Service Combat Command to deliver more than 1,300 planes prior to the infamous Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Since its inception, a secondary mission of the Ferrying Command was the overseas transport of military and diplomatic officials as well as diplomatic mail. These overseas transport flights began in July 1941 when Lieutenant Colonel Caleb V. Haynes took off from Bolling Field bound for Scotland. Soon, the command's transport mission was rivaling its ferrying activities in importance.

The British dubbed this ferrying service across the North Atlantic the "Arnold Line." For the Pilots who flew this perilous route, each crossing meant facing imminent danger, whether it be manmade or natural. For instance, deceptive radio transmissions from the enemy in an attempt to lure unsuspecting ait ships into hostile landing strips were frequent. One veteran pilot cautioned, "The North Atlantic is a war zone. You can't forget that. You must appreciate the ingenuity of the enemy and act accordingly."

Another major threat to navigating the route was the treacherously icy and unpredictable weather. One pilot warned, "Ice is one of the biggest problems in the North Atlantic...It can build up fast, as much as one inch in sixty seconds. You can find it somewhere during every crossing."

At the same time, a South Atlantic route was being developed to North Africa and the Middle East. This southern route was much longer but would provide an alternate means to reach England without risking winter storms. To test the feasibility of such a route, Colonel Haynes, along with Major Curtis E. LeMay, set out from Bolling Field on August 31, 1941, in a B-24. They flew a southern route from Florida to West Africa via Brazil and across Africa to Cairo, then went on to Basra in the Persian Gulf and returned to the U.S. along the same route. This flight completed an unprecedented and thoroughly successful 26,000- mile trip.

Due to the success of this flight, the War Department decided to open regular military service to Cairo beginning in November 1941. After receiving Presidential approval, this became the first ferrying operation of the Army Air Forces outside the Western Hemisphere. The experience gained from this operation would prove invaluable when, a short time later the U.S. found itself at war.

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The World War II Years

The mission of Bolling Field during World War 11 was threefold: 1) to supply air transportation and other services for official Washington; 2) to be ready to participate in the air defense of Washington; and 3) to supply trained men to combat organizations.

General Headquarters Air Force moved into Building 410 at Boiling Field in 1941 with 46 officers and 270 enlisted peronnel, marking the beginning of field's steady expansion to support the war. By 1944, Headquarters Army Air Forces at the Pentagon housed the majority of its 2,600 personnel at Bolling. At one time during World War 11, there were 5,200 persons stationed or housed at Bolling Field. Their presence, and the many other units assigned to the field, created an immediate need for additional buildings.

As a result, more than 150 wood frame and cinder block temporary buildings - barracks, offices and warehouses - were hurriedly constructed around the field throughout the 1940s. While not as architecturally appealing as the brick buildings erected in the 1930s, many of these have withstood the passage of time and are still in use today as the Headquarters for the Air Force Office ofscientific Research, Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the visiting officer and enlisted quarters.

During the war Bolling Field also played a role in the activation of the Eighth and Twelfth Air Force. While the Eighth Air Force was formally activated at Savannah , Georgia on January 28, 1942, by that spring a Bolling Field echelon of Headquarters Eighth Air Force was established at Bolling and "became the nerve center of the force itself." This echelon was extremely active on the feld in 1942, especially in the procurement of personnel required prior to the Eighth's move to England. From the Eighth Air Force Chronology , by Dr. Alfred Goldberg: "Located near AAF Headquarters in Washington, this element of the Eighth's staff worked in close conjunction with the Air Staff itself. At Bolling Field, after numerous conferences and studies, details of the organization, mission and training began to be trans formed into functional terms. Major decisions taken in April and May provided the basis for concrete action to facilitate the reassignment of the Eighth to the United Kingdom and shaped the organization that would be established in the summer of 1942."

Although the great achievements of the Eighth Air Force took place in the European Theatre of Operations, Bolling Field can take legitimate pride in having provided the necessary administrative and planning machinery which formed the foundation of the "Mighty Eighth."

The Twelfth Air Force was activated at Bolling Field on August 20, 1942, and deployed to England the following month under the command of Brigadier General James H. Doolittle in preparation for the invasion of North Africa in November.

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